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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 001271

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PK](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: YOUSEF GILLANI ELECTED PRIME MINISTER

REF: ISLAMABAD 970

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Vice Chairman Yousef Gillani was elected as Pakistan's new Prime Minister on March 24 by a resounding two-thirds majority of the National Assembly; he will be sworn in by President Musharraf on March 25. With the real political leaders (Asif Zardari and Nawaz Sharif) sitting outside of government, Gillani faces a difficult task negotiating among the yet to be announced coalition cabinet members. End Summary.

Gillani Wins Big  
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¶2. (SBU) Under the constitution, National Assembly members may not switch affiliation on a vote for Prime Minister, so voting stuck to party lines. On a 264 to 42 vote, Gillani defeated Pakistan Muslim League (PML) candidate Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi to become the Prime Minister. Gillani will be sworn in by President Musharraf on March 25.

¶3. (C) The nomination announcement, made by Zardari with his son Bilawal looking on, ended weeks of speculation over the choice of PM. Zardari insisted that Gillani would be the Prime Minister for the full five year PM term, although many continue to believe Zardari wants the job for himself after he qualifies by running for a National Assembly seat in April/May by-elections.

¶4. (SBU) In his maiden speech, Gillani noted that the forces of democracy had won through sacrifice, struggle and Benazir Bhutto's martyrdom. He called for a UN investigation into Bhutto's assassination, an apology from the government of Pakistan for the murder of PPP founder Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the release of all detained judges and the supremacy of the parliament as an institution. He said the coalition had the mandate of the people to address poverty, inflation, and power outages and looked forward to working with all parties, including the opposition in this effort. He said he would provide additional details of his "First 100 Days" policy in a speech after he is sworn in on March 25. Several times during the announcement of the vote and Gillani's speech, some National Assembly members chanted "go Musharraf go." (Note: There are unconfirmed press reports that the barriers in front of the judges' enclave are being removed already.)

¶5. (C) Former PPP front-runner Amin Faheem, whose earlier

refusal to withdraw his candidacy had been causing division within PPP ranks, told the press he welcomed the decision, would vote for Gillani and would never quit the party. Elahi became the opposition's candidate on March 23, when the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) withdrew Farooq Sattar's name from the race and decided to unconditionally support Gillani's candidacy. The last-minute deal with MQM drew opposition from Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) leader Nawaz Sharif and raised questions within the PPP and the Awami National Party (ANP), both of whom have disputes with MQM. It appears that MQM will remain in opposition in central government, but the agreement to support Gillani opens the way for PPP-MQM cooperation in the provincial Sindh government.

#### Introducing Gillani

16. (C) Makhdoom Syed Yousef Raza Gillani descends from a politically and spiritually influential Sufi family in Southern Punjab's Multan district. He was a federal minister in Muhammad Kahn Junejo's government from 1985-1988. He joined the PPP in 1988, when he broke with the Pakistan Muslim League and defeated Nawaz Sharif for a National Assembly seat; his relations with Nawaz and with PML-N leader Javed Hashmi remain strained. Currently, Gillani is a Vice Chairman of the PPP (along with Amin Faheem); he was speaker of the National Assembly from 1993-1996 in Benazir's second government.

17. (C) On charges widely considered to be politically motivated, Musharraf had Gillani arrested in 2001 for "misuse of authority" over petty corruption and hiring

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practices; he was sentenced to five years imprisonment and a fine of 1 million rupees. While in jail, Gillani authored a book about his political history and imprisonment. In October 2006, the Lahore High Court approved the appeal of his sentence and ordered his release.

18. (C) Following his release from prison, Gillani attempted to reassert himself as leader of the PPP's Punjab party, launching a well-received speaking tour of the province. Benazir Bhutto strongly resented Gillani's rising popularity and attempted to undermine him by appointing his political and spiritual rival from Multan, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, as the party's Punjab President. Gillani, who sees Qureshi as a late entry to the PPP and a "false" spiritual leader, has actively tried to undermine Qureshi with the party's rank and file. If Qureshi is named Foreign Minister, the two may continue to clash.

19. (C) Gillani was born in Karachi on June 9, 1952. He obtained a B.A. with Honors in English Literature from Government College and a Master's degree in journalism from Lahore's Punjab University. Gillani married in 1979 and has five children, including triplet sons. Gillani identifies himself as a Seraiki (who have an independent language and culture in Sindh) rather than a Punjabi, and is the direct descendent of a Sufi saint.

110. (C) Gillani is seen as pro-western and likely has ties with the U.S. Congress and other parliaments from his days touring as Speaker of the National Assembly. His familiarity with parliamentary procedure and his interest in strengthening the institution will set him apart from former PM Shaukat Aziz. Gillani has already indicated an interest in greater parliamentary scrutiny of the defense budget. He strongly believes in moderate Islam and will support using dialogue based on Sufi tradition to engage Islamic militants. In this, he will agree with the Awami National Party but may clash with the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam party--both coalition members. Gillani is also a strong advocate of decentralization, even to the extent in the past of supporting the idea of a breakaway Seraiki state in Multan.

¶10. (C) Gillani insists he bears no grudges against Musharraf for a wrongful imprisonment, but he will not hesitate to mention his prison time in conversations. As fellow jailmates, he and Zardari have formed a bond that clearly helped tip the scales in favor of his nomination as Prime Minister.

PATTERSON